

NEWS RELEASE



OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

San Diego, California

***United States Attorney
Carol C. Lam***

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For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - January 30, 2004

United States Attorney Carol C. Lam announced that Charles Tappe pled guilty today in federal court in San Diego to one count of possession of unregistered firearms and one count of possession of a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence. The charges, which were part of an indictment returned on August 28, 2003, arose from Tappe's sale and transfer of 26 firearms, including machine guns, silencers, and pistols with obliterated serial numbers, all of which were later recovered by government agents. Tappe was charged with codefendant John D'Intino, who previously pled guilty and is currently awaiting sentencing.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Michael G. Wheat, who is prosecuting the case, this case involves one of the largest recoveries of unlawful machine guns and silencers through an undercover operation in the history of the Southern District of California. Tappe is a 57-year-old resident of Sierra Vista, Arizona. During today's proceedings, Tappe admitted that he used his expertise as a former federal firearms licensee to acquire, assemble, and later distribute the weapons.

In connection with his plea, Tappe also admitted that between April 12, 2002 and July 1, 2002, he sold and transferred the firearms, through codefendant D'Intino, to an FBI undercover operative at locations inside and near Cheetahs, an adult entertainment club in Kearny Mesa. United States Attorney Lam said, "This prosecution has eliminated a source of dangerous illegal weapons from our streets."

Possession of an unregistered firearm carries a maximum penalty of ten years' imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine. Possession of a firearm during a crime of violence carries a mandatory penalty of five years imprisonment consecutive to any other term of imprisonment. Tappe was held without bail and will remain in custody pending sentencing. Tappe is scheduled to appear before Judge Jeffrey T. Miller for sentencing on April 29, 2004, at 9:00 a.m.

DEFENDANT:

CASE NUMBER: 03CR2433-JM

CHARLES TAPPE
Sierra Vista, Arizona

SUMMARY OF CHARGES:

Count 3	Possession of Unregistered Firearm - Title 26, United States Code, Section 5861(d) Penalties: Maximum ten years in prison and a \$250,000 fine
Count 4	Possession of Firearm in Furtherance of Crime of Violence - Title 18, United States Code, Section 924(c)(1)(A)(i) Penalties: Maximum five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine

AGENCIES

Federal Bureau of Investigation
San Diego Police Department, Criminal Intelligence Unit